to maintain their Lebanese citizenship abroad are Christians, the overwhelming majority of whom are Maronites.

(b) The natural increase among the non-Christian population of the Lebanon, and particularly of the Shi'ah and the Druze, is more than twice as great as that of the Christian population. These facts can serve as a key to explain various developments, the influence of which may be decisive in shaping the social character and political fate of the Lebanon.

Any person reviewing the demographic problems of the Lebanon cannot but observe a number of factors common to the Christian population of the Lebanon and the Yishuv (the Jewish community) in Palestine. The natural increase of the Christians in the Lebanon is roughly equal to that of the Yishuv in Palestine.*

Against this, however, the Yishuv in Palestine has incomparably more potential reserve in the way of immigration from abroad than that which is available to the Lebanese Christians through the return of emigrants. And just as the chief concern of Zionism in Palestine is the creation of possibilities for the absorption of Jewish immigrants from abroad, so the Christians of the Lebanon are faced first and foremost with the problem of preventing emigration from the country, and, in consequence, the creation of opportunities for absorbing emigrants who do return and who can return to their homeland, given suitable absorptive conditions. In addition, attention is devoted to the creation of opportunities for absorbing Christians who require a refuge.

The absence of dynamic economic resources in the Lebanon which could increase and expand the sources of livelihood for a progressive population has led to a steady emigration from the country since the middle of the last century. This process has chiefly affected the Christians whose requirements are more developed and whose living standards are higher than those of their Druze and Moslem neighbours; it has created a serious social and political problem which, when together with their lower rate of natural increase, places the future of the Lebanese Christians in permanent danger.

Robert Widmer described the economic reasons for a migration from the Lebanon in the following passage:†

> "Lebanon is over-populated. As has been stated, the density of population is about 55 people to a square kilometre. In view of the topography of the country, its rocky mountains and its thin soil, its scarcity of mineral wealth, and its undeveloped industries, the land cannot support all its people. Consequently it is to be expected that some of them have to emigrate, leaving many dependents on their remittances."

As long as emigration was temporary, it was in many ways advantageous. To the general broadening of outlook resulting from contact with more advanced countries were added the material benefits of an influx of money in the country's capital (brought in by returning emigrants), an addition

* Practices prevailing among the Christians of the Lebanon as against those prevailing among the Jews of Palestine.

† R. Widmer, *Economic Organization of Syria*, Beirut, 1936, p. 14.

17: Tannous S, G-5 (ca. 1947–48)/349 MEI Lebanon MEI

Lebanon that it could no longer be absorbed within the country. The village folk had the choice of submitting to a life of poverty or of emigrating abroad, seeking new opportunities and fortunes. The first alternative was incompatible with their cultural heritage. They were mostly independent farm owners, not share croppers; they were awakened by a comparatively high degree of learning; they were exposed to influences of the West; and they had a long history of struggle against great odds, demanding initiative and enterprise on the part of the individual and the group.

Consequently, they resorted to emigration for relief. Some sought opportunities in the urban centers of neighboring Arab countries. They established themselves there as merchants, teachers, publishers, doctors, and as government officials in various capacities. Most of them, however, turned toward the promising New World, north and south. It is estimated that these emigrants, together with the families they have reared, now exceed in number the population resident in Lebanon itself.

Recent estimates put the population of Lebanon at 1.2 million, of whom about 75 percent are rural. There seems to be no slackening in the high rate of increase. The density of population, one of the highest in the world, amounts to about 300 per square mile of total area, and 1,200 per square mile of cultivated area. In the Middle East it is exceeded only by Egypt, which holds the world record with a density of about 2,000 per square mile of cultivated area.

This biological resource of the village community constitutes both a serious problem and a challenge to Lebanon. Emigration possibilities for the surplus population are no longer as readily available as they were prior to a decade or two ago. A realistic, long-range solution lies in the application of an enlightened population policy and developmental program that would result in controlled growth on the one hand, and in the efficient development of the country's natural resources on the other.

The second major contribution of the village community to the country is economic. This is readily apparent and needs little elaboration. Dwellers in the villages are the farming folk of Lebanon. Their agricultural activity is the mainstay of the

The Lebanese, who returned to their homeland, are a problem on their own, but the gravity of whole essential on the Lebanese Diaspora makes it hard to investigate the subject. Yet the large number of Lebanese emigrants who continue to preserve their citizenship shows not only their affection for their homeland but also suggests their intention of returning there under suitable conditions.

Despite the constant emigration from the Lebanon, this country served as a refuge during the interval between the two wars for Christians emigrants from the neighbouring countries, and in particular for Armenians.* More than 50,000 Armenian refugees from Turkey found refuge in the Lebanon, and despite the economic problems which were raised by the entry of these penniless immigrants, they have added considerably to the Christian strength of the Lebanon, where their fellow-Christians, together with the Mandatory Power, have provided for them in various ways and have facilitated their establishment in the country.

The statistical data on the changes in the composition of the population resulting from its differing natural composition shows clearly the danger awaiting the Christian character of the country. The danger of a Moslem majority, to be sure, primarily affects not Mount Lebanon proper, but the State of Lebanon within its extreme political frontiers, where the Moslem population constitutes a majority in the towns of Beirut, Tripoli, Tyre and Sidon. But the natural increase of the Druzes and Shi'ah in Mount Lebanon, which is twice, or more, as much as that of the Christians, also raises a serious problem for the latter, even in their chief strong hold. Any free-will relinquishment by the Christians of the present boundaries of the Lebanese Republic, and their return to the boundaries of their period of autonomy between 1861 and 1915, would not serve to solve the main problem of preserving the Christian character of their country for any length of time.

This situation faces the Lebanese Christians with a number of grave and urgent problems which require solution in the economic field: the creation of conditions that will free and hamper private emigration, which chiefly affects the Christian population and systematically reduces their numbers in the country; and, in addition, the development of possibilities for absorbing returning emigrants and Christian immigrants from the neighbouring countries. In any case of organized population transfer in this part of the world for the sake of territorial consideration in accordance with economic, religious and communal character, the Lebanon would be more suitable than any other Middle Eastern region for serving as a centre for the Christians.

* Most of them are Orthodox (Gregorians). The Catholics and Protestants among them are included under "minorities" in the tables given above.